

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 00444 081015Z

10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6516

INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

AMCONSUL SONGKHLA

COMUSMACTHAI

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 0444

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, TH

SUBJECT: MUSLIM PROTEST IN SOUTHERN THAILAND

REF: BANGKOK 26894

SUMMARY: MUSLIM PROTEST CONTINUING IN PATTANI BUT SO FAR WITHOUT FURTHER VIOLENCE. THAI OFFICIALS CONCERNED WITH MAINTAINING ORDER IN FAR SOUTH BELIEVE THERE ARE NUMEROUS GROUPS KEEPING DEMONSTRATIONS ALIVE WHOSE AIMS ARE DISTINCT OR IN CONFLICT. THAI OFFICIALS ALSO CONCERNED OVER WHAT THEY REGARD AS INDICATIONS THAT PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION AND MALAYSIAN GOVERNMENT MAY BE INVOLVED, EITHER DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, IN ACTIVITIES OF MUSLIM SEPARATISTS. THAI OFFICIALS IN FAR SOUTH FORESEE NO IMMEDIATE SOLUTION TO PROBLEM POSED BY DEMONSTRATIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. MUSLIM PROTEST IN SOUTHERN THAILAND, WHICH BEGAN OVER MURDER OF FIVE MUSLIMS (ALLEGEDLY BY THAI MARINES) NOV 29 (REFTEL), IS CONTINUING, ALTHOUGH RAMIFICATIONS ARE NOW
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BANGKO 00444 081015Z

EXTENDING WELL BEYOND ORIGINAL INCIDENTS. DEMONSTRATIONS

BY MANY THOUSANDS OF THAI MUSLIMS AGAINST RTG POLICY ARE DAILY OCCURRENCE IN PATTANI. RTG, BESET AS IT IS BY POLITICAL CRISIS IN BANGKOK, HAS DEVOTED ONLY LIMITED ATTENTION TO DEVELOPMENTS IN FAR SOUTH. PROVINCIAL THAI

AUTHORITIES IN PATTANI ARE SEEKING TO CONTAIN DEMONSTRATIONS AND AVOID VIOLENCE, IN WHICH PURPOSE THEY HAVE SO FAR BEEN SUCCESSFUL.

2. ALTHOUGH NO RPT NO MAJOR VIOLENCE HAS OCCURRED SINCE DEC 13 GRENADE THROWING, POTENTIAL IS STILL THERE, AND DEMONSTRATORS APPEAR TO REMAIN DETERMINED TO BRING ABOUT CHANGES IN THAI POLICY TOWARDS MUSLIMS. THEY HAVE ENDURED HEAVY RAINS OF MONSOON SEASON IN PATTANI AND ATTEMPTS BY POLICE TO STOP VILLAGERS FROM ENTERING TOWN TO JOIN DEMONSTRATION.

3. AMCONSUL SONGKHLA AND POLITICAL COUNSELOR ON JAN 6 REVIEWED SITUATION IN THREE FAR SOUTH PROVINCES OF PATTANIWN YALA, AND NARATHIWAT WITH POLIIE LTC SOMSAKDI APHIIHARI, DEPUTY PROVINCIAL POLICE CHIEF IN YALA. LTC SOMSAKDI SAID THAT THERE ARE FOUR ELEMENTS INVOLVED IN STIRRING UP THE DEMONSTRATIONS IN PATTANI, ALL WITH DIFFERENT AND, AT TIMES, CONFLICTING AIMS. FIRST GROUP CONSISTS OF MUSLIM STUDENTS AND VILLAGERS WHO ARE RAISING WHOLE LIST OF LONG-FELT GRIEVANCES AGAINST THAI TREATMENT OF MUSLIMS. SECOND GROUP CONSISTS OF MUSLIM CANDIDATES FOR NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WHO WERE DEFEATED IN THAI NATIONAL ELECTIONS OF JAN, 1975, AND WHO SEE IN CUR-

RENT AGITATION OPPORTUNITY TO MEND THEIR POLITICAL FORTUNES. THIRD GROUP CONSISTS OF DELEGATION OF THAI EXTREMIST STUDENT TYPES FROM NATIONAL STUDENT CENTER OF THAILAND WHO ARE SIMPLY CONTINUING THEIR GENERALIZED CAMPAIGN AGAINST KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT. FOURTH GROUP CONSISTS OF MUSLIM SEPARATISTS, SOME OF WHOM WISH TO ESTABLISH SEPARATE MUSLIM STATE IN SOUTHERN THAILAND, WHILE OTHERS WOULD LIKE TO JOIN MALAYSIA IN SOME FORM. LTC SOMSAKDI SAW NO WAY OF MEETING THESE DEMANDS AT PRESENT AND TBVIOUSLY HOPES THAT CURRENT DEMONSTRATIONS WILL PETER OUT. LTC SOMSAKDI REFERRED TO DEMAND BY DEMONSTRATORS THAT PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT VISIT PATTANI AND SAID CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BANGKO 00444 081015Z

THIS WOULD BE SERIOUS MISTAKE UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES, AS KHUKRIT MIGHT BE KIDNAPPED. SOMSAKDI FELT KHUKRIT SHOULD VISIT FAR SOUTH AT SOME POINT, HOWEVER.

4. COMMENT: SOMSAKDI AND OTHER THAI OFFICIALS IN FAR SOUTH ARE ALSO CONCERNED BY INDICATIONS THAT PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION MAY MIX INTO CURRENT MUSLIM PROTESTS. THEY ARE INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT MALAYSIAN GOVERN-

MENT, EITHER DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, IS INVOLVED IN ACTIVITIES
OF MUSLIM SEPARATISTS, AND THIS MAKES THEM ALL THE MORE
RELUCTANT TO COOPERATE IN MEASURES TO CONTROL MALAYSIAN
COMMUNIST PARTY TERRORISTS, WHO EFFECTIVELY OCCUPY AND
ADMINISTER PORTIONS OF SOUTHERN THAILAND ADJOINING
MALAYSIAN BORDER. THAI OFFICIALS SAW NO IMMEDIATE
SOLUTION TO PROBLEM POSED BY MUSLIM DEMONSTRATIONS,
INSTEAD PREDICTING THAT SITUATION WILL GET WORSE.
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